

Child Care Assistance Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible for child care assistance?

You may be eligible for child care assistance if you meet one of the following criteria:

- You are working at least 80 hours per month and are within the established income guidelines.
- You receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and are in an approved work activity.
- You are a vocational/technical student in program running two years or less and your school and work equal 80 hours per month.
- You are a college student who works or attends school a minimum of 80 hours per month or a combination of both.
- You are attending a college, university or technical institute a minimum of 15 semester credit hours.
- You are a high school or GED student.
- You are a licensed foster care family.

For two-parent households, both parents must meet work or work/school requirements. In addition, you must have at least a 30-day need for child care. CCS will NOT pay for child care for anyone pursuing education beyond a bachelor's degree.

Who can apply for child care assistance?

A child's parent, guardian or a person who is exercising parental control of the child can apply for assistance. If the application is submitted by a person exercising parental control, they must submit a signed statement from the child's parent or guardian giving them authority to exercise parental control of the child.

How do you determine the amount of assistance I will receive?

Assistance levels are determined using a formula based on family size, gross income (before taxes), and the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Depending on your family income, you may be responsible for a co-payment. This co-payment will remain the same no matter how many children you have in care, the number of hours they are in care, or what your provider charges per hour.

If you fail to pay your share of the child care costs to the child care provider, you will be ineligible for child care services as long as there is an outstanding balance with your child care provider. However, if arrangements are made with the provider to make payments, and CCS is satisfied with those arrangements, assistance may be continued.

How many hours may my child spend in child care each month?

210 hours per month is the maximum allowed per child by CCS. However, monthly hours are calculated individually for each family, based on work and school schedules and the need for child care. A certificate will be issued for the number of hours per month that you are eligible for. You are 100% responsible for any child care costs after you reach the maximum number of hours on your certificate.

When will my assistance start?

Caseworkers have up to 10 working days to process your application. If your application is received between the 1st and the 15th of the month, your eligibility for assistance will begin on the 1st. If your application is received between the 16th and the end of the month, your eligibility will begin on the 16th. Do not apply for assistance more than one month before your child care need begins.

How long will my assistance last?

There is no time limit for benefits. As long as you continue to meet the eligibility criteria, you can receive assistance with your child care costs.

How often do I need to reapply?

You will need to check the expiration date of your certificate when you receive it. You may reapply 30 days prior to the expiration date of your current certificate. However, if you have a change in circumstances (job change, income change, new address, new household members, a change in child care arrangements or child care providers or marital status, etc.) you will need to notify your caseworker, in writing, within ten (10) days of the change.

How does CCS pay my child care bill?

Payments are made directly to the child care provider. Providers bill our office, using forms provided, either once or twice a month. Payments are NEVER made directly to parents.

What child care providers can I use?

It can be difficult to find an appropriate child care provider for your children. Therefore, several different types of provider types are allowed under CCS program guidelines. They include:

- Regulated – providers who are registered or licensed by CCS. These can include family day cares, group family day cares, and day care centers.
- In-Process – providers who are in the process of becoming registered or licensed and who have submitted a signed application to the CCS licensing worker.
- Relatives – an uncle, aunt, grandparent, great grandparent, or non-resident sibling to the child who is at least 18 years of age.
- In-Home – a provider who comes into your home and provides care to only your children and who is at least 18 years of age. Will be required to be screened on the SD Registry for Child Abuse/Neglect.
- Informal Care – a family friend or neighbor who cares for only your children and who is at least 18 years of age. Will be required to be screened on the SD Registry for Child Abuse/Neglect.

If you choose a relative, in-home, or informal care provider, he/she will receive a packet with complete instructions. Your provider will need to fill out and return the required forms before your application can be processed.

May I use more than one provider?

Yes. But every provider must meet the requirements of CCS as outlined above. It is important that your CCS caseworker knows how many hours your child will spend with each provider each month, in order for your assistance to be figured correctly. Please make sure to attach a sheet to your application, stating which children are at which provider and the days and hours they are there.

Why does CCS require cooperation with the Division of Child Support Enforcement for all children in the household?

Many children face poverty when adequate child support is not available. Therefore, you are required to enroll and cooperate with Child Support Enforcement within the first six months you are on child care assistance. This helps to ensure that all resources available to the family are fully utilized. For situations when cooperating with the Division of Child Support Enforcement is not in the best interest of the child or family, an exception can be made with appropriate documentation.

What if I have a child with special needs?

CCS does offer a higher reimbursement rate to child care providers who care for children with documented special needs up to age 19. The higher rate must be authorized by your CCS caseworker. Written documentation from a professional such as a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, psychologist, psychiatric social worker, special educator, physical therapist or occupational therapist is required to attest to the child's requirement for special accommodations. Your child care provider will be required to submit information as to the type of special accommodations he/she must make to provide care for your child.

A child who is under court supervision can also be considered “special needs”. A copy of a court order requiring child care must be supplied to CCS.

Why does CCS ask if my child is in Head Start or a preschool program run by the school district?

To ensure children receive a variety of early learning experiences, CCS allows licensed or registered child care providers to bill for a maximum of four (4) hours per day while your child attends a Head Start program or a preschool program operated by a school district.